

## **The American Veteran**

Edition 5, June 2005

Segment 4

This is The American Veteran.

The Department Of Veterans Affairs will be celebrating its 75th anniversary, starting in July.

As part of our year-long festivities, we will profile individuals and institutions pivotal to the foundation and growth of the department. Our first profile follows the career of one of V-A's most renowned physicians: A soldier, surgeon and statesman.

Edgar L. Tucker, Director, Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center:  
(speaking from podium at Houston, Texas, facility renaming ceremony, June 28, 2004) What a great day this is. It is my pleasure to welcome you to a state of the art health care facility that now carries with it the title of a truly great man.

Dr. Richard E. Wainerdi, President, Texas Medical Center:  
Today we are gathered in a very auspicious occasion to honor perhaps the most honored physician in history.

Dr. William T. Butler, Chancellor, Baylor College of Medicine:  
Mike is this generation's most influential medical statesman. He has walked the halls of royalty, treated the famous, and been advisor to presidents. Please join me in welcoming our own, Dr. Michael E. DeBakey.

Benson:  
How are we to know Michael E. DeBakey? His vision helped chart the course of the modern VA. He created medical miracles, trained generations of physicians and set the standard for personal integrity. His dedication to research pushed the boundaries of what is possible. And his leadership created centers of excellence to heal the sick and care for the wounded. This is the legacy of Michael E. DeBakey:

Dr. Jonathan B. Perlin, VA Under Secretary For Health:  
I can think of no individual who has made a commitment to veterans and the care of veterans more passionately or more effectively than Dr. Michael E. DeBakey.

Announcer:

(video of Invasion of Normandy, France, June 6, 1944) The first American soldiers hit the beach. Aid stations are established on the spot.

Benson:

In World War Two, DeBakey pioneered the use of mobile surgical teams. They were put to the test on the beaches of Normandy, D-Day, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944. Thousands of our soldiers died. But eighty to ninety percent of the wounded received immediate medical care. Many of the men who survived their wounds that day owe their lives to the determination of one man: Michael DeBakey.

DeBakey:

One of the things that I noticed: We did not have the most experienced surgeons assigned to the field or evacuation hospitals. They were in the general hospitals in the rear, doing almost nothing. So it seemed obvious to me: Make these well-trained surgeons mobile, create a team and move them when you needed them.

Wainerdi:

The concept is that after you are hurt, there's what is called the "golden hour." It is important that within one hour, you're stabilized and helped.

Benson:

A few years later, when our troops fought in the frozen hills of Korea, DeBakey's concept had become standard operating procedure – with a new name: the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital – better known as "M.A.S.H."

Dr. Robert Lynch, Director, S. Central Health Care Network:

Dr. DeBakey recognized that - rather than sitting back and passively waiting for someone to bring the survivors to you - getting out to them is going to change morbidity and mortality.

Wainerdi:

The result is that in Vietnam, people had a much higher survival rate than in any other war. And now in the Gulf Wars, both I and II, the survival rate is astonishing – it is very, very high.

Benson:

DeBakey later turned his attention to the rehabilitation of war wounded. He instituted ongoing medical research in the V-A Hospital system.

DeBakey:

The idea was to bring to the veterans hospitals, and therefore to the veterans, the best quality of medical care we had.

Benson:

DeBakey went on to tackle the challenges of heart disease, an innovator in vascular and cardio-vascular surgery. His gentle touch with people is legendary.

Wainerdi:

He's very, very good with patients. It is remarkable to see him with a patient and have the patients benefit from not only his medical care but his human care.

Benson:

At 97 years old, Dr. Debakey is still active with V-A and is an inspiration to us all.

In the coming months we will bring you more profiles of the men and women who helped found V-A.

Over the past 75 years the Department of Veterans Affairs has stood ready to help veterans in need.

We encourage all veterans to use the services and benefits they have earned.

If you would like to contact us about the stories on this program, or for any other reason, here are a few ways to do so:

By telephone, call 1-800-827-1000

On the Internet at [WWW.DOT.VA.DOT.GOV](http://WWW.DOT.VA.DOT.GOV)

Or, visit your nearest Vet Center

As we wrap up this episode of The American Veteran, we leave you with some of the sites and distinctive sounds of this year's "Rolling Thunder" held on memorial day in Washington, DC.

For the Department of Veterans Affairs, I'm Jim Benson. See you next time.

(video and sound of motorcycles traveling on Washington, DC, street)

Rolling Thunder Participant:

Thank heavens for the guys that slugged it out overseas that allowed us the freedom to do this. Let's find the ones that we lost.

Rolling Thunder Participant:

I just came down to show support for my brothers and sisters in arms.

Rolling Thunder Participant:

They are the heroes.

Rolling Thunder Participant:

This is something that we need to do every year to remind the public that their freedoms, their lifestyles, their attitudes, it's because of those who fought for it.

Rolling Thunder Participant:

I'll come again as long as I can.

- End -